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## THE GESTURE-LANGUAGE IN SOUTH ITALY.

IN South Italy there is current a venerable story, which is here given with all reserve, as the diplomates say: in other words, it is totally unworthy of belief. The story is this. A stranger present at a cabinet council in Naples, after some silent pantomime had taken place, asked when business was going to begin, and was told that it was over. 'But,' objected the astonished stranger, 'nobody has said a word.' 'True,' was the answer; 'but surely you observed what was going on?' 'I saw nothing going on,' said the stranger, 'except a few shrugs and grimaces, and the king signing his name. You don't mean to say you call that business?' 'Of course,' was the answer. 'What's the use of a long talk, when we can express our meaning as well, and more quickly, by signs.' The story, though an exaggeration, is, nevertheless, not so utterly absurd as it seems to the English reader. Southern Italians use a great deal of gesture while speaking; not because they are deaf or dumb, for they are quick of hearing, everlasting talkers, and remarkably intelligent, but because they have picturesque instincts, and are not satisfied with expressing their ideas by feeble words; while they satisfy their natural impatience by using gestures in lieu of whole sentences, and can, and do, occasionally carry on conversations without any speech at all. For example, I have seen a man in a balcony near the top of a house narrate entirely by gestures his day's adventures to a friend on the ground floor of a house on the opposite side of a street.

The gesture-language is believed to be, in the main, the same all the world over; still, in places widely apart, in which the habits of life are very different, it is natural to expect a corresponding difference in a language which is plainly imitative, and nothing else. In Mr Tylor's work upon the *Early History of Mankind*, which contains a very interesting account of this language, it is stated that, according to the general practice of man-

kind, shaking the head is the sign for the negative 'No.' In South Italy, however, shaking the head never means 'No,' but always, 'I don't understand you; what do you mean?' while 'No' is expressed by elevating the chin and protruding the under-lip a little; and a still stronger negative by the same movements, to which is added, scraping the under-side of the chin with the tips of the right-hand fingers, holding the knuckles outwards, and the fingers slightly bent. In the curious affidavit in support of the will of a deaf-and-dumb man, unable to read and write, quoted by Mr Tylor, which explains the signs used by the testator to express his testamentary wishes, it is to be observed that the testator expressed his death by laying the side of his head in the palm of his right hand, and then lowering the right hand, palm upwards, to the ground. In South Italy, a Catholic country, death is expressed by making the sign of the cross with the first two fingers of the right hand held together, upright, before the face, that being the final action of the priest when administering the sacrament to a dying person. The gesture by which the English deaf-and-dumb man expressed his death, would, omitting the lowering of the hand, mean, in South Italy, sleep. In this country, we beckon a person towards us by holding a hand or finger with tips upwards. In South Italy, however, the tips are held downwards, and the English manner of beckoning is used for salutation. The verb 'go' is expressed in South Italy by holding the open hand, the palm perpendicular, to the ground, and pointed in the intended direction, and shaking the hand up and down from the wrist; while in this country we simply point with the index finger. In South Italy, 'hunger' is expressed by extending the thumb and first finger, keeping the others closed, over the mouth, and giving a rotary motion from the wrist. The reader is at liberty to try this upon any organ-grinder he meets, and mark the result. 'To-day' is expressed by closing all the fingers of the right hand except the index, then pointing downwards, making a rapid slight movement of the hand up and down; 'to-morrow' is the same, except that the movement

is greater, and from the elbow. Numbers, of course, are shewn by holding up the fingers. So much for the language itself, and now for the method of using it.

After the revolution of 1860, the police affairs of South Italy were carried on by the Italian carabinieri, a remarkably fine body of men, of great intelligence, and mostly from the north, in place of the native *sbirri*. The consequence was that the malefactors did as they pleased, the carabinieri being powerless. They complained that it was of no use their attempting to cope with a people who, by a gesture, a look, and a word in an unknown tongue (for the dialects of South Italy are unintelligible to people from the north), hatched plots under their very noses. Riding once in a carriage in Sicily past a string of country carts, each of which had a driver, armed, lying prone on top of the load, I heard one of these men call out: 'Ah ca!' very loud, as if to his donkey; but he meant to attract the attention of the carter in front, who understood perfectly well, and looked back, whereupon the first man held up his hand, and rubbed together the tips of his thumb and first finger (the sign for money), giving a glance at the same time towards the carriage. In answer, the friend nodded. The following remarks had been exchanged: 'Rich folks there, eh?' 'Uncommon.' I thought at the time, if these gentry had been brigands, and my coachman an accomplice, he would probably have nodded, and straightway the armed carters would have jumped down, surrounded the carriage, dragged me off to the mountains; and I should have been the subject of numerous letters in foolscap paper, quarter margin, exchanged between polite diplomatists, who would apparently be only too glad of the opportunity of assuring one another of their 'distinguished consideration.'

But to return to our story-teller in the balcony. The narrator began by straddling the first and second fingers of his right hand across the first finger of his left, to express a ride; then he pointed to his own stomach, to shew that he was himself the rider; next, he pointed with his hand in the direction of a neighbouring village; which, together, meant: 'As I was riding to —.' Then he put up his hands, and bent his head, as one does in taking aim with a gun; next held up his hands, palms outwards, and started back to express surprise; then he moved one hand quickly round over the other, as we do when imitating a drummer for children, and bent his body sideways, to express a fall; which meant: 'Suddenly a man with a gun appeared, and aimed at me, whereupon the donkey started back with fright, and I fell off.' At this the friend down below held up his right hand with the knuckles towards the balcony, and fingers slightly bent, and rapidly moved it from the wrist backwards and forwards (the way of inquiring in general), which meant in this instance: 'Well, were you hurt?' In answer to this, the man above lifted his eyebrows, put his hand to his hip, and limped a little way, to express:

'Nothing to speak of—a little lame, that's all,' and thus the conversation proceeded.

The chief prison of Palermo, the capital of Sicily, consists of a number of detached houses in a large court-yard surrounded by a high broad wall. The prisoners are kept in the houses, and sentries march up and down the wall, keeping a look-out within and without.

Every day, men and women may be seen standing outside the wall, communicating by gestures with the prisoners at the top windows of the houses within. The parties to the conversation can see one another's faces and their expression, but can scarcely hear one another speak. They converse thus by the half-hour together. One may see a woman, for example, moving her mouth in saying 'Cieco,' and putting her hand to her forehead, meaning, 'Cieco is ill.' Whereupon a prisoner inside, possibly the father, throws out his hands, making the general sign of inquiry: he wants to know 'How did it happen?' and the woman answers: 'Hunger did it,' by making the sign for hunger, already explained. Then the man throws his hands up, and it can be seen that he says 'Dio mio!' and is expressing his affliction.

Of course the gesture-language is largely used in rows, and naturally some of the expressions are more forcible than refined. One which invariably winds up every row amongst the women of the lowest class is this: a belligerent who is getting the worst of it, but desires to retire with some *éclat*, suddenly turns her back on the enemy, throws all her clothes over her head, and retreats. Contempt cannot be more strongly expressed.

Love-making by signs is very general. The method has many recommendations; for as the lovers are not seen together, and don't write, they are not easily found out. Every window opens to the floor, and has a balcony, so that neighbours have great facilities for the pastime. The language of love is very simple; it is always the same, and always interesting and new. The gentleman begins by taking out his handkerchief, which he passes over his face, looking all the time at the lady, and throwing into his face and eyes expressions of admiration for her; at the same time he compliments her on her beauty by passing his hand over his mouth and chin. The lady's answer is a blush, hiding her face, except the eyes, behind her fan, and pointing to the rear, to indicate that mamma is coming, and retreats. Next time, the same play on the gentleman's side, followed by possibly a glance, not of discouragement, from the lady; whereupon he hugs his left side, to express that he loves her to distraction; and the lady flees, to return the next day, and observe the gentleman, of course to her great astonishment and displeasure, repeat the previous gestures, ending by shewing her the palms of his hands, and looking entreaty, which any young lady even unacquainted with the particular language in question would understand to mean: I vow by &c. that I love you more than—and so forth. Do you love

me? The answer to which, of course, depends upon circumstances; and thus the ancient comedy proceeds. It is understood to be extremely interesting to the *dramatis personæ*. Love-making, short of the 'ask-papa' part, is frequently carried on in South Italy in this way; and it not seldom happens that when papa is inexorable, or the lady in a convent, the whole affair, including agreement and preparations to run away, is transacted solely by gestures—apropos of which it is on record, that on an occasion of the sort, all being prepared, and the gentleman in the street waiting at the lady's door with the carriage intended to carry off the happy couple, an awfully gruff voice was heard asking: 'Are you there?' The lover looked towards the voice, saw that it came from the object of his balcony affections, and, utterly disenchanted, fled. This story, although nearly as incredible as the first narrated, is given without any reserve: it is quite true.

## WON—NOT WOODED.

## CHAPTER XXVI.—TOO MANY MOUTHS TO FEED.

In social warfare as in political, the reward of an honest neutral is commonly to be detested or despised by both parties; and perhaps no more convincing evidence of Martha Barr's genuine goodness can be afforded than the fact, that, though she belonged to neither of the two factions whose feud deluged Brackmere with ever-welling streams of scandal, she was respected and even beloved by both of them. The great question which agitated that semi-marine resort was the Simcoe question. Instead of the 'Wal, sir, and how do you like our country?' addressed to strangers by every enlightened citizen of the United States, the inquiry: 'Well, and what do you think of our Mr Simcoe?' was put by the inhabitants of Brackmere to every visitor. It was necessary to say Yes or No; black or white was the only wear; piebald was inadmissible. Mr Samuel Simcoe was either a cherub of prodigious proportions (speaking spiritually), or he was the Flesh and the Devil. It was most important to the advocates of each of these antagonistic views to secure the adhesion of Martha Barr; her moral and religious weight was justly estimated as sufficient to turn the at present evenly balanced scale, and no arts were left untried to obtain it. The advent of Mabel had been looked forward to by more than one female partisan with an interest of which, of course, she was wholly unconscious. They hoped to use her as a lever by which to work upon Martha herself; and it was with this object that Mrs Bannacre and Miss Jennings had honoured her so early with their personal attentions. Without being quite aware of her own exact position with respect to the two factions, Martha could not but be well acquainted with all the grounds of quarrel; the case of each side had been stated to her with such remarkable perspicuity by the other. Self-justification was the object of neither, for there was nothing particular to justify; denunciation, of both. Not only were the machinations of Simcoe exposed, but the motives that

actuated his unprincipled partisans. The bias of Miss Jennings, for instance, was accounted for on the ground that she had systematically set her cap at the great man for years, and would 'jump at an offer from him to-morrow.' The bitter hostility of Mrs Bannacre was, on the other hand, set down to the account of her dissatisfaction at his pecuniary expenditure. Instead of his surplus guineas passing into their natural channel—namely, the pockets of his nephews, the little Bannacres—they went to build churches wherein services were held in close imitation of benighted papists. Poor Martha, who always endeavoured to believe the best of everybody, had absolutely nothing of good to go upon; she heard only *nil*. The utmost allowance that a Simcoeite would make for an anti-Simcoeite, or *vice versa*, was a 'Well, my dear, we can only hope that the poor woman is out of her mind'—for the troops on both sides were chiefly Amazons. Except from the Saturday to the Monday, when the business men came down from town to their families, there were no males to speak of in all Brackmere, except Mr Simcoe and his son Claude. No wonder, then, that the question: 'What do you think of Mr Simcoe?' should have some importance even for Martha, though a non-combatant, and that she had addressed it, as we have seen, to Mabel. But she had the good sense to perceive that her young guest must be kept aloof from the quarrel; and when the latter timidly inquired whether it was necessary for her to accept the invitations to be a member of the Dorcas, or the Sisterhood of the Blessed Etheldreda, had answered decisively: 'Certainly not, my dear, unless you wish it.'

And Mabel did not wish it.

Of course she suffered in public opinion for this lukewarmness, since the same liberty of conscience was not likely to be accorded to her as to her cousin; but the result was on the whole satisfactory, since, after a while, both parties ceased their attempts to make a proselyte of her, and left her to herself. With few exceptions, it was only under Martha's roof that she met these people; but that happened pretty often. Her hostess was dreadfully partial to 'seeing her friends about her,' and having 'a little sacred music,' which poor Mabel had to extract from a very profane piano; and these evenings with society struck melancholy into her whole system, just as a material 'wet blanket'—a damp bed—affects the lungs. The guests were for the most part contributed by the Simcoe faction, more perhaps from the fact that the Rev. Claude Simcoe played the flute, than from any better reason. With feeble toots he used to accompany Mabel through many dismal dirges, varied by an occasional shriek of uncontrollable hilarity from the piano. This instrument had been purchased (appropriately enough 'for a mere song') by Martha years ago, when the old *George Hotel* had been pulled down to make way for its more ambitious successor; and it was old Simcoe's theory that it had been only accustomed to play music-hall tunes, and resented solemn melodies. Whenever a key became recalcitrant, instead of passing over the incident in discreet silence, the old gentleman would shake with laughter, in spite of Martha's, 'I am quite surprised at you, Mr Simcoe,' and Miss Jennings' pathetic remonstrances. Mabel always laughed too, which delighted him immensely. 'She is an excellent sort, is Miss Mabel,'

he confided to her cousin, 'and worth a dozen of that chap;' by which term he was accustomed to indicate his son and heir.

Mr Claude was a dandy in his way, and so far as the canons of the church allowed him scope; and wore a handsome ring with a dragon on it, which was very conspicuous during the flute-playing.

'Is that your arms?' inquired Mabel of him innocently on one occasion.

'No; no more than it's his legs,' answered the old gentleman for him. 'If we've got any arms, they should be *fire-arms*—a pestle and mortar.' The humour of which conception would have brought him to an untimely grave, had not Miss Jennings, assisted by the whole strength of the company, proceeded to alap him on the back.

'Thank ye, ma'am, thank ye. If we had only met each other a little earlier,' he gasped out, and then had a frightful relapse. He was well aware that Miss Jennings wanted him to marry her, and it gave a zest to life. She knew he laughed at her, and yet did not despair. She was always endeavouring to give him pleasure, and in fulfilling her threat of telling him that Mabel thought very highly of him, had really succeeded. It laid the foundation of a good will towards Mabel, which improved daily. His carriage was sent to give the ladies what he called 'an airing,' every fine afternoon. For Mabel's sake, although in truth Mabel would have declined it but for Martha's, the kindness was accepted; and the little donation which the latter always gave the coachman on such occasions was an expenditure she could ill afford.

Poor Martha's pecuniary affairs were indeed getting in a sad state. For the first time in her life she had begun 'to owe a little money;' and the sense of debt—so heavy to the unaccustomed shoulders, so light to those which use has bowed and shaped for it—oppressed her sorely. It is easy to say that the carriage, for instance, and therefore the coachman's fee, might have been dispensed with. But she hoped that it might save a doctor's bill; for Mabel, though as beautiful as ever, was growing pale and thin. Her little parties, too, might have been relinquished, but their cost was almost infinitesimal; and then again she argued (though with less reason) that a little gaiety did her guest good, and counteracted her tendency to—no, not to 'mope,' for she was always active and helpful—to muse. There was scarcely a word that could quite describe Mabel's condition—always cheerful and pleasant when spoken to, always ready to chime in with any suggestion—and yet so abstracted and thoughtful, that she would sometimes require to be addressed a second time, and then would start as from a dream. More than once, too, of a morning the watchful Martha had detected in her darling's face the trace of tears. It was for her sake that the cup of poverty tasted so bitter. 'If I could but die and leave her what I have,' thought Martha simply, 'then she would get on pretty well alone.' But she never breathed this idea to Mabel (as some folk equally kind, and who imagine themselves equally unselfish, would have done), nor permitted her to perceive to what straits she was being driven. She had not only censured, but positively forbidden, her guest's little scheme of making money by lace-work. 'It was not necessary,' she said; and somewhat to Mabel's surprise, had clenched the matter by adding, 'and would be

unbecoming.' Her natural good sense, in fact, was blinded by her love for this young girl, whom she strove to keep, as in her palmy days, exempt from toil—a flower to charm with hue and perfume, not a plant for rough and homely uses. This was very 'weak' of Martha, of course: 'she should have had the moral courage to look matters in the face; nothing is more reprehensible than false pride, &c.;' it is so easy to give good advice to poor people. Well, Martha Barr (who was not proud upon her own account, however, as we shall see) did certainly make this mistake—that she suffered Mabel to remain in happy ignorance of the true state of affairs. When the expected letter came from Ju. across the seas, with cordial offers of pecuniary assistance—though not, to Martha's great surprise, of a home—for Mabel, her hostess warmly urged her not to take it. If a cheque had been enclosed in the letter, she would not have advised her to return it; but it was not enclosed. 'Expenses were heavier at Hong-kong than had been expected. Fred. was not one to save, and, of course, the failure of her own dowry was a great disappointment to him—indeed, he had calculated upon it; still, they were by no means so poor, thank Heaven! that there was not something to spare for a beloved sister.' An arrangement had even been made with a London banker for paying Mabel *fifty pounds per annum*. The Pennants were by no means rich, and the offer was not, on the whole, illiberal. Perhaps Mabel would have accepted it, but for Martha. The fact was, the latter was extremely indignant at Mrs Pennant's not offering the shelter of her own roof to her only sister, though she did not give this reason for her opposition; had she done so, Mabel could scarcely have combated it, though she possessed a very sufficient answer to it in her own bosom.

That source of supply, therefore, had been cut off, and the knowledge that this had been done by her own hand by no means lessened Martha's disquietude. Matters, as we have said, had come to a crisis, and after much counsel with herself, and balancing of small accounts, and calculations adapted to the exchequer of Lilliput, Martha Barr arrived at a supreme conclusion. She determined upon a measure so grave, and indeed appalling, that the very idea of it put her into a perspiration; suspense, under such circumstances, she felt to be even more intolerable than the doing of the deed itself; and, accordingly, she did it at once. 'My good Rachel,' observed she one morning, as that acid damsel was removing the breakfast things, while Mabel was 'setting to rights' her own room above-stairs, 'I want to have a few serious words with you, when you can conveniently spare the time.'

The excellent Rachel did not relish this preamble. She wished matters to remain as they were without words; if her mistress once began to scold—which she had never yet ventured to do—there was no knowing where it would stop, for she was not unconscious that there were many chinks—not to say fissures—in her armour with respect to dutiful service, into which a shaft of reproach might very reasonably enter. It would be very dangerous to allow a precedent to be established for letting fly such shafts at all.

'As to time, mem'—Rachel always addressed her mistress as though she were a memorandum—



she replied, 'my time is yours, of course; but as to spare time, that is a thing with which—ever since the young lady above-stairs has come into this house—I have been altogether unacquainted. It's ring, ring, ring, run, run, run, from morning to night; not as I blames her, for young people is naturally thoughtless, and only thinks of their own selves.'

'Nay, Rachel; it appears to me that Miss Mabel has been always most careful to save your'—

'I beg your pardon, mem,' interrupted the waiting-maid with elaborate humility, 'but I didn't catch the word; careful to do what?'

'Careful to save your legs,' said Martha boldly, her own legs trembling under her very much.

'Oh, indeed, mem,' answered Rachel, rattling the knives and forks together viciously; 'I am sure I wasn't aware of that, or I would have felt very grateful. If my skin is not worked off my bones, it's a mercy, that's all I've got to say. Things used to be very different once; but now a poor body has no time to sit down, far less to meditate and commune, as it might be, with the heart within her. Then, again, I'm not one to complain upon my own account, Heaven knows, but my mind is always in a ferment about the bills; it's threepence here, and threepence there, and threepence here again, for shrimps; and the milk-account is rose to double; and as to tea, why Mr Simcoe himself could have swum in the tea he's drunk since Miss Mabel came into this house.'

'Never mind about Mr Simcoe, Rachel, if you please; but it is quite true that our expenses have increased, and largely,' said Martha gravely, 'since Miss Mabel has been with us. It was with respect to that very thing that I wished to speak with you. The fact is, it will be a most delicate and unpleasant matter to break to her'—here Martha sighed deeply—'but I find there are too many mouths to feed in this house.'

'That's just like your softness of heart, mem—if I may be so bold as to say so—and does you infinite credit; but sooner than you should be worried, I would break it to the poor young lady myself—that I would.' As she said these words, Rachel folded up the table-cloth, and hugged it to her bosom pathetically, as though it had been a helpless infant, and she a baby-farmer.

'That is quite unnecessary, Rachel, besides being wholly out of the question,' observed her mistress firmly. 'Of course, I should myself acquaint Miss Mabel of any change that is unfortunately necessitated in my own household.'

'That's just as you please, mem; I know my own place too well, I hope, to put myself forward, or meddle with what, after all, is no concern of mine. When do you think it's likely—not, I'm sure, as I want to hurry her—as the young lady will be going, mem?'

With the knives and forks clutched in her fingers, and the table-cloth tight under her arm, her head on one side, and her single eye sparkling with the malice of a raven laden with plunder, the excellent Rachel stood at the parlour door, all ears for the reply.

'The young lady going, Rachel? Why, you don't suppose I'm going to turn Miss Mabel out of doors, surely?' rejoined Martha indignantly.

'I don't know as to that, mem,' replied Rachel, scratching her head (so great and genuine was her perplexity) with a bunch of knives and forks; 'but

I don't see how three mouths is to be made two, unless'—

'Surely, my good Rachel,' remonstrated Martha, 'you cannot expect, much as I esteem and value you, that I can sacrifice to your interests my own flesh and blood!'

The excellent Rachel dropped everything upon the floor (including every vestige of respect for her mistress), folded her arms, and ejaculated with amazement: 'What? Am I to go, then?'

'Not to go, my good Rachel—certainly not to go,' explained Martha, in conciliatory tones. 'I have made arrangements so that you will not altogether leave us. My plan is this: That you should be here in the morning as usual, just to get things straight above-stairs, and set us going, as it were, below; and then, for the rest of the day, that your services should be given elsewhere. I've been talking to Miss Jennings about it, and she will be very glad of them. You will have your meals at Mollusc Terrace. As to wages, I will take care that you do not lose in that respect.'

The celebrated plank that intervenes between the sailor and eternity is as ten-inch iron backed with teak in comparison with the partition that sometimes separates the most diverse of human passions in a single breast. On one side is frantic rage, and on the other meek humility—batter that scarcely melts in the mouth. The excellent Rachel was within a hairbreadth of springing on her mistress like a tigress, and tearing her cap to ribbons, her ribbons to rags. It was a mere toss up whether she should 'go in' and annihilate Martha on the spot, or express her thanks for past favours, and a hope for the continuance of them, like a tradesman's card. Her honest indignation yearned to evince itself at the tips of her finger-nails, but prudence and self-interest won the day. She shook her head, snuffled, and burst into tears.

'You have been always good to me, mem, far better than I deserve; and though service is no inheritance, I am sure you will not desert me in the time to come.'

'Indeed, I will not, Rachel,' exclaimed Martha with energy. 'I shall never forget, I hope, what an excellent creature you have always proved yourself. I only hope Miss Jennings will appreciate you as I do.'

Rachel still shook her head. She had her misgivings (as well she might) about that matter; but on the other hand Miss Jennings was not a strong-minded lady, and there would be little pickings to be got now in both houses.

'I trust the wind will be tempered to the shorn lamb,' sighed she. 'Heaven bless you, mem!' With that she picked up the table-cloth, wiped her eye with the corner of it, and fled to the regions below.

#### CHAPTER XXVII.—AN OFFER BY PROXY.

It was out of the season at Brackmere, which was accordingly deserted, save by the aborigines. To all of these, Martha Barr was as well known as the town clock (and considered equally correct), and the report that she had put herself on half-rations in the matter of domestic service, convulsed society. The news, on the other hand, that Miss Jennings had made a fractional addition to her establishment, fell comparatively flat: nothing was more common than the substitution of a page-

boy for a parlour-maid, or even of a footman for a page-boy; but any diminution of a domestic staff was rare, and resented upon public grounds. Brackmere was a 'growing favourite' as a place of resort, and it was important that it should hold its head up.

On the esplanade, then, where the good folk of the town were wont to congregate, even in the early spring; out on the pier-head, to which the hardiest denizens of the place, linked two by two, would struggle against the wind; in the Palazzos, Belvideres, and St Angelos, this topic was exhaustively discussed, nor was it long in reaching the ears of the great Simcoe of Tiddliwinks.

'I daresay Mr Simcoe will not like it, my dear,' had been Martha's reflection, when the news of Rachel's semi-departure had been broken to Mabel, and received with a philosophy which was only affected, inasmuch as she had some difficulty in repressing an extravagant joy.

'It is most kind and sensible of you, I am sure, to say you will not mind,' pursued Martha; 'and doing a little work for ourselves is better far, of course, than getting into debt. But then, you see, it certainly does look like crying poverty; and Mr Simcoe is so particular about the prosperity of the place, and especially of that of his own tenants: Mrs Bannacre says she shouldn't be a bit surprised if he gave me notice to quit.'

'I am perfectly certain, Martha, that Mr Simcoe will do nothing of the kind,' said Mabel indignantly; 'but indeed, as long as the rent is paid, I don't see what it matters to him whether we have half a servant or half-a-dozen.'

'That is because you don't understand the natural distaste for poverty, my dear, which belongs more or less to all men, but especially to landlords. They may mean very well to you; but if you are "going down hill," as they call it, they will recommend you to take a house more adapted to your reduced circumstances. When a servant is taken ill with some infectious disorder, even a kind mistress, you know, packs her off to the hospital, "where she will be so much better looked after;" and will even let her run a little risk in being removed thither, rather than keep her in the house. Now, poverty is like the scarlet fever itself in that respect.'

'And you have caught it of me,' sighed Mabel sadly.

'No, no, no,' said Martha vehemently. 'Pardon me, my darling, for giving way to bitterness, which, believe me, was not upon my own account at all. Heaven knows that so far as I am concerned, I would as soon be my own servant—so long as I am my own mistress—as possess Mr Simcoe's chariot and prancing steeds. But I do wish for a little money now, I own, not on account of those little bills I told you about, for we shall soon save enough to settle them, but because'—She looked at Mabel, so tender, so fair, so delicate; and thinking of all the shifts and struggles that she might be put to, her soft heart melted within her, and she fairly burst into tears. 'It was wrong of me, my darling—it was selfish and wrong of me,' cried she, wringing her hands, 'to bring you here and mate you thus with sordid toil. I advised you ill in urging you to refuse the offers of others. I did it for the best, as I flattered myself; but I was too venturesome; and now, alas, it is you who have to pay for my own folly!'

'Nay, Martha; it is your too generous thought for me that has been in error. I do not speak of your hospitality; let it suffice to say that I would not exchange this roof for that of a palace; but you should have told me from the first exactly how you stood. Then, instead of being a burden to you, I might have been a support, as I will be now, God willing.'

'You are not going to work your eyes out over that fine lace, I do hope?' exclaimed Martha apprehensively.

'Certainly not, my dear,' said Mabel, tying on an apron that had once adorned the excellent Rachel, in preparation for her new household duties. 'I hope I know my place better than that; and now,' cried she with a gay laugh, 'I'm off to work, so please to give me a kiss before my cheek gets smudged.'

It seemed as though Mabel's spirits had risen in inverse proportion to her fortunes, for she went about the house all that afternoon with a song on her lips as joyous as any lark's.

The dinner, which the hostess had cooked with her own hands, was pronounced to be a great success; and after it, Martha had gone out for 'a blow' on the esplanade. The two ladies could no more go out in the afternoon together; and this, perhaps, was the greatest inconvenience attaching to the new state of affairs—because it did not do to leave the house without any one in charge; and on this occasion it was Mabel who was on guard. She was engaged in dusting Martha's room—the prettiest little household fairy she looked, believe me, that ever used a bunch of feathers for a wand—when there came a ring at the front-door.

Mabel ran into her own room and peered cautiously out of window—a measure of prudence which Martha had recommended to her on the score of tramps. She forgot at the moment that this particular window was, as a post of observation, valueless, because the front-door had a little porch, which would generally conceal the visitor. On the present occasion, however, it did not conceal him, because the visitor was too large for the porch. He bulged out on all sides of it, and without disclosing the features, revealed the proportions of Mr Samuel Simcoe, without the possibility of a doubt. Mabel's heart beat high within her when she saw who it was. She had a plan in her head—the secret of her present high spirits—for succouring honest Martha, which depended upon this gentleman's assistance, and Mabel felt assured that it would be given. The new organist of St Etheldreda had failed to give satisfaction. She had resolved to apply to Mr Simcoe for the vacant situation. She had been used to play the organ in her father's church, and was really no mean performer on that instrument; but even if she had been less skillful, she flattered herself that she would still have got the place, and the stipend, which was sixty pounds per annum. The relations between herself and the great Simcoe were so very cordial, that she was sure he would not refuse her a favour, and particularly one which would not only cost him nothing, but be a convenience to himself. How lucky it was that she had persuaded Martha to go out for a walk, and could have a few words with this opportune visitor alone. She tripped down-stairs and opened the door to him with a courtesy of profound humility.

'Lor, then, it's true!' said Mr Simcoe, looking at

her blue apron, which she had designedly retained. 'So many people have told me about it, that I thought it must be a lie. So you wait upon yourselves do you, Miss Mabel? Well, it must be one good thing to have got rid of that cursed Rachel.'

'I am glad you take that view of the matter, Mr Simcoe,' said Mabel, smiling, and ushering him into the parlour; 'for somebody did say that because we were growing poor, you would probably, as a prudent landlord, proceed to turn us out of house and home.'

'That must have been Sister Bannacre,' observed Mr Simcoe decisively. 'That woman has made a religion for herself, as it were, out of the worst parts of Christianity. Or if that shocks you, my dear,' for Mabel looked very serious, 'let us say she has suffered the good wine of religion, of which she has such an immense stock in hand, to turn to vinegar. But never mind *her*, my dear, just now; I want to talk to *you*.'

He had called Mabel twice 'my dear,' which she thought rather strange; but the little excess was in the right direction—as looked at from the organ-loft—and she let it pass without notice. Mr Simcoe had manifested for some time a very fatherly manner towards her, and this was doubtless only a development of it.

'No, my dear,' continued Mr Simcoe, after an interval of gasps and panting, 'I am not quite such a sordid monster as Mrs Bannacre and folks of her kidney paint me. I like my money, and other people's too, for the matter of that, if I can get hold of it by fair means; but I don't weigh everything by *avoids*. It ain't true that a thing is worth exactly what it will fetch, or else what wouldn't one give for a retriever?'

Ticked with this witticism, it was some time before Mr Simcoe recovered from the perilous condition in which mirth always placed him, and purple and panting, once more resumed the thread of his discourse.

'Brains, my dear Miss Mabel, are better than money, and goodness than both, and I am free to confess that I respect your cousin, Martha Barr, with her half-servant, a deal more than the lord of this manor. I hate him like the devil, to be sure, for shutting up that footpath to my church, across the fields; but that's neither here nor there. Well, next to your cousin, now, who do you think I am going to mention who has brains and goodness (or I am much mistaken), and beauty, about which there can be no mistake whatever, and a kind word for everybody, and who stands up for a fat old fellow like me behind his back—eh? Well, it's you, Miss Mabel, and that's the truth; so I won't make your pretty cheeks burn any longer. It's you as I respect, and more, and hope to find that I may have the right to call you something else than just "Miss Mabel," and that's what I've come here to talk about, if I had only the breath for it.'

It is said that women are destitute of humour; but it must be stated, to Mabel Denham's credit, that it was with no slight difficulty that she could at this point restrain a burst of merriment. The idea had suddenly flashed upon her that this funny old gentleman was about to cap all his previous feats of facetiae by proposing himself as a husband.

'Now, I daresay you can pretty well guess, my dear,' continued Mr Simcoe, 'what I am driving at; but still I had better put the matter in plain words. You have met my son Claude again and

again, and I daresay have long ago taken the measure of his wits. He's not a wise man, that's true; but he's an honest and a kind one, and it is not the cleverest men, let me tell you, that make the best husbands. Well, Claude, as you know, is the rat that eats the malt that lies in the church that Sam built. He has got a very tolerable income; and when I pop off the hooks—which may happen any day, as I am told, with my habit of body—he'll come into a fine property. I want to see Claude married to a sensible woman, who will take care of it and of him. He's a fool, you'll say?' Mabel raised her hand, and was about to open her mouth in protest; but Mr Simcoe motioned with his hand for silence. 'He is a fool, my dear—granted, granted; but he's a good man in his way, and I'll settle five thousand pounds upon you on the day you marry him.'

Mabel looked at the old man with grave respect, all inclination to mirth quite dead within her. His earnestness and honest solicitude had something attractive in them. He was by far the most vulgar man—in the ordinary sense—that she had ever met with; but of the sterling worth with which she had been always inclined to credit him, she felt now assured.

'My dear Mr Simcoe,' said she softly, 'pray, believe me, when I say, that your generous offer evidences a good opinion of me, for which, however undeserved, I feel most sincerely and keenly grateful. I am not so ignorant of the world as not to know that to a penniless orphan, like myself'—

'Not a word about that,' ejaculated the old gentleman with energy. 'I don't care about that, my dear—I don't, indeed.'

'But, unhappily, Mr Simcoe,' said Mabel firmly, 'I have nothing to give you in return for your generosity, *except* my thanks: I cannot marry your son Claude.'

'I see,' replied the old gentleman mournfully; 'you won't take him at the price, nor perhaps at any price, eh? Or else, when I've set my heart upon a thing, mind you, I'm not balked for a few thousands. I said five; but you're worth more than five. I'll'—

'Mr Simcoe,' said Mabel with dignity, 'I have spoken once for all. I am sure you will not forget yourself so far as to bargain for a wife for your own son.'

'Lor, it's often done,' replied the old gentleman simply. 'If you happened to have a mother, she and I would be auctioneering here for half an hour; but, of course, in this case—treating with a principal only, as the money-lenders say—it would be indelicate. Well, I'm sorry, I'm most uncommon sorry; and it will be a deuce of a blow, mind you, to my boy. However, I am sure I can trust you to keep silence in the matter, so that he need never know.'

'But surely Mr Claude is aware?' began Mabel, with kindling eyes.

'Tut, tut; not a bit of it!' answered the old gentleman. 'Lor bless you, don't put yourself in a pucker about that, my good young lady. Why, he'd no more have had the pluck to say: "Go and ask her for me, father," than to climb the steeple of his own church, to gild the weathercock. He has never even so much as said he loved you, within my hearing.'

'So it seems if I had accepted this offer by



proxy, that it might have been repudiated by Mr Claude himself," observed Mabel coldly.

"Nay, nay, Miss Denham: you don't think so ill of me as that, I hope," remonstrated the old gentleman. "If I had failed to make a match of it between you, you may depend upon it that I would have paid forfeit handsomely; but it was impossible that I should have failed. Though I suffer Master Claude to do much as he likes with the blessed St Etheldreda, he knows I'm not one to be trifled with on a matter of serious importance; for where I've once set down my foot, as you may imagine," added the old gentleman with a rueful glance at his portly form, "I'm not to be easily stirred. If Claude had never set eyes on you in his life, I say he would have taken you to wife, from his father's hand; but, indeed, my poor lad is over head and ears in love with you, Miss Mabel. When I've been in the vestry, and told him—just for a bit of fun, you know—that you were in church, he'd put on all his paraphernalia higgledy-piggledy. That little shift he puts his head through over his clothes—whatever's the name of it?"

"The alb, I suppose, you mean?" suggested Mabel delicately.

"Ah, the alb. Well, I've seen him with that alb on wrong side before. When you are near him, the poor lad don't know whether he is standing on his head or his heels. Whenever he turns his face upon you in the pulpit, you'd think the painted window was throwing gules upon him. I've watched him often and often from my pew, my dear, as gules as he was, and like to burst with laughter. You can't deceive a father's eye," observed Mr Simcoe with sudden gravity. "If you don't believe me, Miss Mabel, just look up at him, quite straight, when he gives out the text next Sunday, and see whether he don't at once begin to stammer and blush: now, just do that, and see."

Mabel courteously but firmly declined to venture upon this experiment.

"Well," said Mr Simcoe, rising slowly, and speaking with quite a plaintive accent, "it seems that I have come on a fruitless errand. I have been indifferent honest—for a business man—and when men have said to me: 'Well, we can't trade,' I've mostly been able to reply to them: 'That's your loss as much as mine.' But here, Miss Mabel, I can't say that; I feel that this is my loss and Claude's—not yours. However, we shall be as good neighbours as ever, I hope. For my part, at least, I promise you, that though you have declined a father-in-law, you have not lost a friend. Good-bye, lass, and God bless you." He lingered on the door-step to sigh, and shake his ponderous head. "How deuced well you look in that blue apron: I'm main sorry for poor Claude!"

Mabel was sorry too, and not only for Claude. Her hopeful scheme of obtaining the organist's place at St Etheldreda's was put an end to at once and for ever by this unlooked-for communication. It was impossible that she could apply for an ecclesiastical situation, the acceptance of which would cause the officiating minister to wear his robes inside out, and break down in his sermon. She sat down at the table with her head in her hands, to think out some new plan. She was not without devices—humble projects for adding her mite to Martha's scanty income—even now; but

it is not necessary to describe them. An event was about to happen, which, in its consequences, was fated soon to place them in the limbo of purposes unfulfilled.

### A PET OF A RAILWAY.

My pet is out at nurse—baby-farmed, in fact, by an elderly trunk-line of much and sore experience. The venerable beldam is supposed to be sedulously training it in the way in which it should go; nevertheless, I do not feel justified in remitting to hirelings the entire superintendence of my favourite line; and cherishing, as I do, a truly paternal solicitude in its wellbeing, I keep an eye on its ups and downs, rejoicing sincerely in its traffic returns, when it has any, and always fondly encouraging its indefatigable efforts to get some. Commercially, as well as mechanically, it is a line of very steep gradients. It has uphill work of it, and its best friends are apprehensive of its one day going to smash with a run. For myself it is a source of constant anxiety; and my amiable partner in life is accustomed to observe that if I have a weakness, a skeleton in the cupboard, a bee in my bonnet, a shadow on my path, a corroding care on my soul, or any other drawback on the sunny felicity I enjoy in my union with herself, it is the delicate linelet, known to Herapath and the Stock Exchange as the Axem and Backagain branch of the Little Western Railway. Admitting the soft impeachment, and with the view of winning the compassionate interest of mankind for my darling and for myself, as well as of easing the contango for the next account, I invite mankind to join me in one of my periodic visits of inspection. Our trip will be guarded by a time-table conscience clause, so that no one will be compelled to go who declares off before we start.

Consider Axem reached, and the wide, wide world loitering on the platform, or scrambling for tickets, or studying the architecture and management of a great railway, and one of its main stations. Axem station is palæontological, or it is nothing. It is exceeding old, mouldy, rusty, fluffy, and mephitic. The cast-iron canopy above was once glazed; but now it makes patterns on the sky like crochet-work curtains. Its dusty nooks are nests for sparrows, mice, bats, beetles, and even owls, I ween. Below, are rails, and rails, and rails, mostly frayed like thongs of liquorice-root which boys have chewed, and scattered anyhow like jack-straws for boys to play with, or as if collisions were chronic hereabouts, and business too brisk to admit of repairs. The waiting-rooms behind us have been waiting long for waiters who dare not venture in. They are but filthy dens; and who knows what vermin or wild beast, or bone-crunching giant may be lying in wait behind the doors? The ticket-office is a mystery of iniquity to look at. Its window will soon be blocked up altogether with greasy accretions. Already its deposit-shelf is clogged and shining, like the outfall of a sewer in mid-winter. Verily, it is an ancient station, and hath 'an ancient fish-like smell' about it; but withal it is a bustling one. It must be the exercise-yard for locomotives in hospital, or locomotives undergoing penal servitude for the collisions of their frisky youth. Backwards and forwards, in and out, this way and that way, and any way they seem to fancy, they go squealing and shrieking,



and groaning and bumping. Still, every now and again, a *bond-fide* train does come staggering and wagging up to the platform. Cattle-trains roll slowly past with a broken, billowy motion; and the long-suffering brutes low, and groan, and stamp with no unfounded terror, as they pass what they may well be excused for considering shambles. Mineral waggons gallop hither and thither with a hop, and a skip, and a jump—running scrimmaging races, heavily handicapped. Some carry lime, some carry coal, and the rest carry ore; while the baking heat of the day is enough to fuse the lot into ‘pigs.’

But where is our own modest equipage? It is ‘all alone by itself’ on a siding, basking and snoring in the tropical heat, with a dirty oily night-cap on the head of its engine, and its responsible guardians fast asleep on the cokes of its tender. But the getting-up bell resounds through the sleepy air, and in a moment the stoker is up and at work. He whips off the night-cap, closes the door of the furnace, reverses his stroke, turns on the steam, and backs the train with unfaltering audacity through the intricate network of liquorice-root right up to where we are standing expectant; by which time the driver has become fully awake to his onerous responsibilities. The Station-Master is not now to be seen. That dignified official has retreated to his den, exhausted with the effort of whistling away a parliamentary train on the trunk-line, and as a matter of principle, disdaining to compromise his dignity by interfering with branch-trains. The deputy S. M. does his best to look like his principal. He also is asthmatical; but his superior officer is fat, and he is lean. Wiry, fidgety, and fussy, he worms his way in and out amongst our small group like a packing-needle basting canvas. At each twist of his vermicular progress he exclaims in a husky hiss: ‘Take your seats, going forward; Pelton, Strawyard, Cat-o-nine-tails, and Backagain.’ In we rush—I last, that I may make a note, a sort of mental way-bill, and frame estimates of traffic returns. Away we scud—the pace slackening rather than mending as we proceed. After a few seconds of impetuous onset, we settle down to a moderate swing; and letting the windows down, we welcome the draught, which comes so opportunely to cool our half-baked carriages and fevered brows. The prospect begins to be pleasing, when, lo! it is suddenly blocked. Fat, fair, and forty, an apparition with a glass stuck in its eye-hole looms through the off-window; whence presently a voice, sharply sliced by the current, ejaculates: ‘Pret. comf, eh!’ Then projecting itself into the carriage and out of the draught, the well-whiskered apparition begins to expatiate explanatorily, congratulating, and encouragingly, but in gulps or yelps, as if the effort to please were attended with spasms. ‘Fine stretch of road; winds with the river; if the train were only longer, the engine might see the signal at the back of the van without twisting its neck—its funnel, I mean: splendid hill landscape on that side, but too close to see it: magnificent water-scape on this side, only my head’s in the way. Not on our line yet; ours doesn’t jolt like this; soon feel the difference. There’s our signal—all right; turn off in a jiffy, and then you’ll see.’

Slow, slower, slowest; click, clack, click-clack: the points are passed. Apparition averts his head, and bawls out: ‘Fine day, Mivins. All

well at home? That’s good.’ Then resumes within: ‘Now you feel the difference. A trifle harsh, perhaps; and it grates a little, I can’t deny; but then what would you have? The sleepers have not had time to get cozily settled in their beds; line not more than twelve months old.—Slow, do you say? Well, yes, it might be quicker, but then do you know the gradient, sir? Not far short of one in two, sir: like going up the side of a house, sir. I’ll tell you a tale about that. You know when my bird’s-eye plan of the line was being sat upon in the House of Lords, my Lord Quiz was pleased to say, says he: “It looks, Mr Bumpus, more like a spiral tramway to the top of a blast-furnace than a civilised railroad for Christian people.” Comical fellow, Quiz, if ever you happened to meet with him! But he was warm in our favour, notwithstanding his fun—very warm, I may say; and he has great influence on committees, because he’s so witty: and as not a soul opposed us, either there or anywhere else, we managed to carry the bill.—The engineer, say you? Why, yes, I flatter myself that’s a coat that’ll fit nobody’s back but my own. Sir, I planned the line, I made the line, I work the line, I superintend the line, I sometimes drive, I always guard. No train goes without me. Strange, isn’t, sir?’ turning and looking me full in the face.—‘Bless me, is that you? Well, you can bear me out, you, of all men, in what I was about to say, which was, that everybody that ever had to do with this line from first to last has always been anxious about it, always dotingly fond of it, and madly devoted to its interests. Oh, what sleepless nights I have had; it makes me yawn to think of it.—But here we are—this is Pelton Bray. *Au revoir!*’ And gaily kissing his jewelled hand, he swings himself free of the train with that amazing dexterity which for years I have envied, but have never attained.

Yes, friends, this is Pelton Bray. There is a hamlet of that name, I am given to understand; but what it is, or where it is, no one seems to know. This, I suppose, is the Bray—this fine expanse of moorland. Behold the purpling heather and the golden gorse! the sheep, too, lying like white boulders up and down the brown slopes! Hark to the pewit’s song of the wilderness, harsh, but sad! As for the station at Pelton—well, there is one in the ‘guide,’ and, figuratively speaking, there is one in fact, since our train is legitimately at a stand-still; and if there was anybody to get out or in, you would probably see them at it. There is a booking-office and a waiting-room, and sundry *et cetera* institutions, only they are as yet in an elementary stage of development. Mr Bumpus kindly explains that it was only six months ago that the buildings were commenced, and that is why they are at present no more than nine inches high. True, matters might have been hurried, but in work designed to last for ever it is not well to hurry; and the Board is prudently holding back, ‘pending the development of traffic.’

As may be supposed, we do not make a protracted stay at Pelton; and indeed, in the space of some ten or fifteen minutes, we are once more in motion—such as it is. ‘Strawyard Peel’ comes booming like mountain thunder from the cavernous mouth of a gigantic porter or station-master—large enough and loud enough for the head shoutership at Euston Square. He is at once

both station-master and porter—two single persons rolled into one, which perhaps accounts for his proportions. But though stalwart, he is of a tender heart. His frown, as he examines the engine, is both anxious and stern; but pity prevails, and he strokes the fly-wheel playfully—the right way of the fur, so to speak—and pats the poor monster's vibrating ribs with unaffected concern. Poor 'Boiler' is not so young as he used to be, and this heavy pull from Pelton has manifestly strained him. Tremendously out of breath, with bowels rumbling, and his whole frame racked by St Vitus's Dance, he is, in truth, an object of deep compassion. But 'there's life in the old dog yet.' An oil-bath, followed by a brisk shampoo with chamouis leather and comminuted emery, will soon set him to rights in his looks and spirits; and we are not so rude as to stop and watch the venerable monster at his bath or at his victuals. On the contrary, we avail ourselves of his extreme exhaustion, as an opportunity for studying nature, holding an extemporised picnic in a ruin hard by, and listening to a most learned lecture on the origin, uses, and destiny of a Peel. This is a choice specimen, consisting mainly of a great many jackdaws and a great deal of ivy. From the round hillock on which it stands, we command a magnificent panorama, which unfortunately is now, and, as far as my observation goes, is usually veiled in mist. A shrill whistle informs us that 'Boiler' is himself again, and summons us from 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul.' Our prospects of entertainment on our journey for the next two miles are agreeably diversified by the condescension of Mr Bumpus, who condescendingly takes a seat in our carriage, just as if he were merely an ordinary passenger; an arrangement which enables him to communicate freely out of his vast reservoirs of scientific experience, and at the same time to share our luncheon.

'Yes, sirs; I see it, I see it—I see it as plain and as clear as—as the case admits of; I see a golden future for this nice little railway. This is the day of small things; but the day of large things will come—must come—shall come—if I can make it. You have been gazing on those virgin valleys of Eden, friends, as well as the fog would allow. Well, the day is at hand, or nearly so, when the dwellings of man will replace the nests of the moorcock, and the boom of the bittorn will be lost in the roar of machinery.' A canopy of smoke announces the neighbourhood of a manufacturing town, but we shoot by it: we run away, in a spirit of defiant and mocking hilarity, from the very place of all others on the line that common sense would have bidden us to stop at, and merrily make all the running we can for a lonely spot in the howling waste, a mile away. Of course, we ignominiously shoot past the station, and have to grunt and grind our way back. And this is the more to be mourned, because the establishment really deserves all the respect that a train well brought up can exhibit. It is a neat stone hut, in two apartments, one 'booking,' and the other partly refectory and partly dormitory. The Board has evidently been solicitous about the lodging of the unhappy exile who has been left in charge of this outpost of the habitable world. Next to the garden, a space, about the size of a neat front-door, has been cleared on the slope of the bank; and with oyster-

shells—found, doubtless, in the drift of the cutting—the worthy man has imprinted the name of his estate or station; and a singular name it is, 'Cat-o'-nine-tails' is not a common name in the gazetteer, but it is common enough here, and, indeed, is the name of a common. Bumpus says it is manifestly a corruption of 'Calton Entails.' Certainly, there is a look of entail all around. I don't, at this moment, recall any tract of country that looks so heavily primogenitured as this particular bit. It once grew a whin-bush about half-way down the fell, but even that is charred now. The station itself, however, is excessively thriving. On a siding may be seen a coal-wagon, which I take to be the rudiments of 'that extensive mineral traffic to which the promoters of the Route' [they always called it Route, not Branch, in the prospectuses they issued from time to time] 'confidently look for returns that will render the investment of capital highly remunerative.' In modest attendance on the mineral traffic is a fair-sized cart, with one horse and two boys. The great railway wagon is being tapped of its treasures in favour of the distant ovens. The stout but lissome Bobbie who acts as guardian angel of the dépôt does not happen to be in his best humour to-day. He is large, loud, and stern. The train is overdue, and he makes awful record of the fact in an eightpenny book of doom. To mark his displeasure, and, if possible, to counteract the ill consequences of our insane delay, he scarcely waits for the train to come to a stand-still, before shouting in Jovian thunder: 'Take your seats, going forward.' It is rather too bad. Several of us had expressed a sort of Mechanics' Institute desire to improve their minds by a visit of inspection to the smelting-works; but as they are a mile off, and as Mr Bumpus assures them that no stranger is ever, on any account, permitted to enter the premises even 'on business,' a spirit of resignation supervenes.

Our journey has reached that stage at which, even on the hottest day, one begins to feel chill, and somewhat weary, even on a Branch. The fact is, that a feeling of getting within sight of the end of a tremendous undertaking has taken possession of the passenger mind; and the material manifestation of it is incontrollable fidgets. Everybody in the train is in a state of feverish delirium, gathering up traps, arranging skirts, settling shirt-fronts and shirt-collars, brushing hats, snapping reticules, and titivating back-hair. The bustle is subsiding; the wild excitement is toning down to intense suspense and deepest silence; when, after a thrilling pause, the hoarse scream of the exultant 'Boiler' brings the train to a stop in the middle of a mighty bog. An octave lower, but still with the loud pedal full on, the voice of authority succeeds to the ravings of 'Boiler.' 'Backagain, Backagain, Backagain,' resounds from carriage to carriage with appalling solemnity; our journey is over, and our destination reached. Once outside the privileged pale, my beloved consort and I lean awhile on the station gate, and trace our way through the wilderness in moody retrospect. Again and again, here and there, up and down, and everywhere, we catch glimpses of our little pet railway, skirting the hills, or climbing the hills, or 'making bob-holes' in their base for its train 'to come through.' We proceed to skirt the bog; and keeping the winding carriage-road, we pass the gilded gates

and antlered stags in stone, and 'lodges in the wilderness,' as the poet calls them, and the mountain park of Sir Hullah Baloo, the lord-paramount of all this desolate region. He is from home; he is always from home; and, all things considered, wisely so. There is nothing more to do, or to see, and we return to the station and the train. It appears as if all the Backagain passengers were en route back again. Boiler snorts in joyous recognition. The whistle with a pea in it trills the melody of *Partant pour la next Station*, and he starts with a burst. He has it all his own way, poor fellow, now. He fairly gallops, and the collar never even touches his shoulder. Metaphorically, he gripes the bit with his teeth, and bolts. The next station is the terminus. I suppose the train sometimes stops to take up 'down' passengers; but how it can hold on till it gets them up, I can't make out. It never stops when I am in it, but whizzes, and fizzes, and clatters, and crashes its way from terminus to terminus, like a three-hundred-pound shell from an Armstrong gun, till with a whack and a crack, we bang into Axem sheds.

## GERMAN ADVERTISEMENTS.

CLOSELY akin, and having many things in common, whilst varying in as many, the English and the Germans alike delight in advertising. There is, however, something specifically characteristic in German advertisements—a spirit as clearly defined as that in German home-life, German politics, and German beer. True, we find represented in their newspapers the Agony column of our own Daily Jupiter; and the Editor's Letter-box, that medium of communication of our 'penny Sundays,' wherein 'Floretta, with light-brown eye, and flaxen hair, and considered lovely,' seeks a suitable matrimonial connection; but we have no such publication in all England as is published daily in one of the fairest and most famous watering-places on the Rhine, the *Residenz* of a small duchy, which has succumbed to an overpowering army, mised by conscription, and armed with the deadly needle-gun, and become a mere province, a step-child of a great European power. The organ in question is not, however, ground to political tunes; it is intended to advertise, and nothing more. Yet it is found in all houses, among rich and poor; and, indeed, a tradition is current that certain old pensioned officers now abstain from breakfast on Sundays and holy-days, since no *Tageblatt* then appears.

Imagine a newspaper, small quarto, of from eight to forty-eight pages, costing five shillings and fourpence a year, and devoted exclusively to advertisements—every page full of novelty, and often productive of laughter! Within reasonable limits, it is scarcely possible to convey an idea of its diversified contents. The first pages are devoted to official, police, law, and sanitary notices—notice of contracts, bankruptcies, &c.; these are followed by trade advertisements, touching silks, fish, groceries, wines, coffins, wet-nurses, and information as to how, when, and where the thousand-and-one wants of this life, and death, may be supplied. Of these we shall say nothing, but proceed at once to the social contents. What would our reserved island ladies say to finding their birthdays openly recorded under the most transparent initials, with their ages, the street and house-number duly added, in

some such sort as this?—'Hearty congratulations to the dear, tall, black, stout Gretchen B—, on her to-day's cradle-feast, at No. 18 in the Hauptgasse.

From one who knows her well,  
But his name won't tell.'

Or thus: 'To the dear, stout, pretty blonde, Anna K—, in Wilh. St. No. 78, right hearty congratulations from a silent admirer.'

At times our attention is called to a swain who has forgotten the birthday of her whom his soul loves, and who honestly confesses it by heading in capital letters, 'Better late than never.' After thus introducing his salutation, his effusion jingles on:

Your birthday's past, as I do see;  
Jimminy-krimminy, O dear me!  
What can I say, but tell you plain,  
I'll try not to forget again.

This is at least modest and penitent, but, alas! some of us are but human, and self will assert itself even in congratulatory birthday addresses: a picture of a beer-barrel, or a couple of wine-bottles, indicates that 'a big drink' would be regarded as an appropriate celebration of the festive occasion; for instance, 'A cheer with three times three to the worthy Master-joiner, Caspar L—, No. 6 H— St, from his true and thirsty friends.

Don't be afraid, my worthy son;  
A cask of beer we can empty soon;  
Then broach one in good time, d'ye see,  
Nor very small need it to be.'

Or thus:

We're thirsty souls, and could drink some beer,  
If you'd give us the chance, old fellow:  
We'll empty a barrel to make good cheer,  
And toast you too with a bellow.

What can a 'million donnerndes Hoch' be, other than a cheer as loud as a million thunders—or a bellow?

Happy couples proclaim their approaching nuptials thus: 'With the loving consent of their parents, W— H— and S— T— herewith announce their betrothal.'

In the following notice there is something truly Homeric: 'HAVE A CARE—a fat cow will be hewn to pieces in my yard, on Tuesday, at 11 A.M. sharp, and the flesh will be sold at 3d. a lb.'

About our next extract there is a grim blood-thirstiness that would have done credit to the court of King Theodore: it reminds one of the Pantin tragedy under patronage, and must surely emanate from one whom urgent private affairs have recalled from the scene of the war ere his appetite for horrors was satiated: 'T— M— recommends himself for private slaughtering. Terms moderate.'

Our next is of another description: 'When two young ladies, whose room is on the ground-floor in the B— Street, attired for the night in complete negligee, amuse themselves with mouse-hunting, they should take the precaution of first closing the curtains; and, when the pleasures of the chase are over, they jump into bed with a single spring, they should mind the bed does not break down with them.

Whoe'er the cap is found to fit,  
Need not scruple to wear it.'

A lady who seems to have left the place



unbekannt to the inhabitants, causes the following to be inserted: 'GOOD-BYE! Want of time obliges me to adopt this way of bidding my friends and acquaintances adieu. I shall be sure, at the proper time, to recollect the small debts I have left behind me. Signed J. P., Widow, late of the Hotel Z—.' Dated 'Over the Frontier.'

Here follows a parade of private grief, upon which the pen of a Juvenal might employ itself. That our readers may have it in its integrity, we render it literally: 'DEATH NOTICE.—To all relations, friends, and acquaintances, I intimate generally, rather than by special notice, the sad news of the death of my dear, inwardly and hotly loved faithful wife (mother, daughter, sister, and daughter-in-law), Julia R—, née L—, who, scarcely in the twentieth year of her life, the past night at 12 o'clock, at the hour and the minute at which she, to me, ten days before, had presented a healthy and dear boy, in consequence of miliary fever, softly in my arms, as a good evangelical Christian, with trust in the Lord God, who has the rule over life and death, slept away, after that she had been to me scarcely three-quarters of a year the faithfulest and happiest wife, protection and aid in all my sorrows, sufferings, and cares. Hence, I beg for silent sympathy in my unforgettable and irreparable loss. W—, 17.7.70. The deeply weeping and deep cast-down husband, A. R—.'

We now find a notice of death headed 'Thanks.' 'THANKS.—My husband, H— K—, now rests in God; and I would thank all those who accompanied him to his last resting-place—the Worshipful Sick and Burial Clubs, the Fire Brigade, and the Madrigal Society for the soul-stirring hymns at the grave-side; as also all those who helped and comforted me during his illness.—THE SORROWING WIFE.'

And here again is a similar notice, which moreover contains a happy suggestion to our Woman's Rights Committee, for the utilisation of the able-bodied female population.

'THANKS.—To all those who accompanied our now-in-God sleeping son, P— N—, to his last resting-place—to the honourable virgins who bore his body company—as also to his friends who carried him thither, our heartfelt thanks.'

Such would-be benefactors to the human race as Mrs Gamp ('if I could afford to lay out my feller-creeturs for nothink, I would gladly do it, such is the love I bear them') are scarce even among ourselves; but that there are in Germany, too, 'sober creeturs to be got at eightpence a day for working-people,' who 'don't name the charge,' but suggest the modesty of their prospective claims, would appear from the following: 'At No. 21 in the Roof-chambers, orders for sick-nurses are taken kindly; also the undressing and dressing of corpses is performed. The advertiser can produce the best testimonials. Charges moderate.' Whether the testimonials are from those who have been under the advertiser's hands, or from those who may yet come under them, does not appear. In these days, it might not be extravagant to suppose that the testimonials had been procured by spiritual agency.

Having dealt with deaths, we may remark that births are announced thus: 'To the Privy Councillor L—, a son. Name, J. F. S.'

Here are some miscellaneous morsels.

'To be sold cheap, a tolerably modern dress-coat, in very good preservation.'

'Eleven young hens and a cock, good layers, to be sold.' Is this the *rara avis*?

'Chamber-sportsman M— resides at No. 7 L— St. The above recommends himself as a medium for the destruction of all species of vermin.'

The mahogany child's chair, and the Oxford prohibition concerning the maintenance of dogs, cats, and other singing-birds, are so old as to have been entered in the *Index Expurgatorius* of the most inveterate Joe Miller; but we can produce a modern instance.

'BIRD HALL, WILH. ST.—I have the honor to announce to the honourable public of W— that I opened my bird-hall on Saturday last for the sale of Parrots, Aquaria, and all sorts of other foreign and indigenous birds. Entrance to non-purchasers, 6 kreuzers; to purchasers, 3.—Most respectfully, R. S.'

We will conclude with two notices illustrative of the German national characteristics—Music and Economy.

'The Singing Society meet to-night at the Muckerhöhle.' The name is not inviting; but the locality is historical.

And: 'A gentleman wishes to hire a fur-cloak for a few weeks.'

#### WHAT CHARLIE GRIFFITHS PAID FOR HIS COMPANY.

##### IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

Mrs BLESSINGTON SMITHSON's party was the party of the season. Mrs Blessington Smithson had determined to outdo herself, and was accordingly outdone. There was music in the drawing-room, and cards in the library, and croquet on the lawn, and coffee in the conservatory, and great local guns everywhere. There was music instrumental, and music vocal—a professional 'double-bass' (local), and a professional violin from town. There was a gentleman with long hair, who sang comic songs without pressing; and a lady who sang Italian with an Irish accent, with pressing, and who, on the strength of having sung in a chorus at a London concert, was looked upon as semi-professional, and gave herself airs; and there were young ladies and young men, and old ladies and old men, all of whom sang or did not sing, gathered together to add to the glories of Mrs Blessington Smithson's party. Yet the whole affair was very stupid. Laura found it so, and Charlie found it much more so, even though he had got pretty little Evelyne James all to himself in the garden, and his wife had just elicited quite a gentle storm of applause by the singing of 'Claribel's' last. Even Captain Clements, who frequented these places on principle, found it slow, and was glad when an empty seat beside Laura gave him an opportunity of expressing his opinion.

'You look bored to death, Mrs Griffiths,' he said. 'It is rather stupid; but I never expected anything else. After the way you sung that last song, you at least should not complain of stupidity.'

'Oh, as to that, Captain Clements, I always

forget everything when I sing—I can think of nothing but the music then.'

'You are very enthusiastic.'

'Why not? Are not you, when anything pleases you?'

'O yes, of course.—Don't you feel it very warm here?'

'Not very. Do you?'

'Yea. I was going to propose a stroll in the garden. Are you afraid of the change?'

'Not at all. Wait till this poor woman has scrambled through her effusion, and we will go.'

In a few minutes the effusion was finished, and they went out into the garden. Passing the summer-house, Laura caught the sound of voices through the roses.

'Of course I love her; why should I not?' said one that sent the blood back from her heart with a rush.

'Because you told me so once, and I believed you,' pleaded the other.

'Erylyn, dear, you know that I was obliged'—But the rest of the sentence was lost as they moved on.

'Captain Clements,' said Laura hurriedly, 'take me home; I'm not feeling well.—No; thank you; I'll not wait for Captain Griffiths. We can get out through the gate here. Please, take me away at once,' and she drew him along the path towards the garden-gate, and so into the street, before he had time to inquire what all the hurry was about. They had an uncomfortable walk home, Laura's silence or short answers to the captain's remarks only increasing his wonder at the sudden change in her. He felt, as he remarked afterwards, that there was a screw loose somewhere, but where the wanting screw fitted, he could not for the life of him tell. The words that had agitated Laura so painfully, had been unheard by him, the apparition of a dainty little foot ahead in the act of croqueting a fallen foe having been quite enough to engross his faculties at the time; and so he was utterly in the dark as to what had happened, and was not sorry when Laura wished him 'good-bye' at her door, and left him at liberty to stroll back and finish out the afternoon with 'Fairy-foot' at croquet.

'O Captain Griffiths, we've been looking for you everywhere,' cried Mrs Blessington Smithson a little later. 'We can't find your wife anywhere. What have you done with her?'

'My wife! isn't she here?' replied Charlie. 'I don't think she has left. I saw her last talking to Captain Clements: I'll go and ask him; and he strolled off for the desired information.'

'Gone! Clements,' he cried, when that officer told him. 'What a queer girl she is. Why could not she ask me to see her home?' And then he went back to the hostess, and made what excuses he could for his wife; and soon after took leave himself, and hurried home to find out what was the matter.

His wife's door was fastened when he knocked at it.

'Who is that?' said Laura's voice inside.

'It's me!' cried Charlie, forgetting his grammar.

'Why have you locked the door, dear?'

'Because I wish to be alone.'

'Nonsense, Laura. Let me in. Clements told me you were not well, so I've come back to see if there is anything I can get for you.'

'No; you cannot: I don't want anything.'

These were the first words of the kind that either of them had heard since their wedding, and consequently they fell somewhat heavily on Charlie's heart; but he bit his lips, and, determined to conceal his annoyance, made another effort.

'Is there nothing I can get for you, Laura?' he asked.

'No.'

'Won't you let me in? I might be able to do you good.'

'No. I don't want you. I wish you would go away!'

'Confound her temper!' growled Charlie, now fairly losing his. 'What the deuce is up with her? I'm not going to bother about her any more, if she does not choose to be civil;' and he stumped down-stairs, and off to the club, in a very bitter state of mind indeed. There he lost three 'pools' running, and played so savagely, that the other players stared in wonder at the usually easy-tempered man, and after one or two attempts at conversation, left him alone, and spoke to him as seldom as possible.

At dinner that evening, Laura sent down word that she was not well, and had gone to bed; so Charlie had to dine by himself, eating fast, so as to get it over; and then he clapped on his hat and went out. At the club-door he met Clements.

'How is Mrs Griffiths now?' said the latter.

'I don't know,' was the reply. 'I say, Clem, something's wrong there. What is it all about? What did she say to you at the Smithsons?'

Clements told him all he knew of the matter, which did not enlighten Charlie much, and then they both went up-stairs.

'Perhaps,' thought Charlie, 'she's annoyed at my talking to little Evy James. Hang it! she needn't be jealous of her. Every fellow in the place spoons Evy. I might just as well get jealous of Clem. Well, women are queer creatures, and no mistake!' with which sage conclusion to his perplexities, he determined not to think any more of them till he got home, and was soon deep in the mysteries of 'blue upon black, yellow's your player.' But when he got in, Laura was asleep; and so there was no opportunity of opening the subject till breakfast-time next morning, and then the servants interrupted them so often, and Laura was so silent, and looked so dreadfully ill-used, that it was some time before he summoned up courage to speak. 'Laura,' he said at last, 'what is this which has come up between you and me? Why cannot you tell me? I can't know how I have offended till you tell me what it is.'

'Oh, you know very well,' said Laura pettishly; 'and if you don't, that Miss James can tell you.'

'Oh, then, it is about Evy, after all. You're surely not jealous of her, Laura?'

'Evy, indeed!' said Laura, growing very pale. 'It is a pity, as you are both so fond of each other, that you did not marry her instead of me.'

'Come, I say, Laura, this is carrying it a little too far. I just chaff for a few minutes with a girl I have known half my life, and you are ready to jump down my throat about it. I don't like it; it's not fair of you at all.'

'And it's not fair of you,' retorted his wife hysterically, 'to tell that girl what you did when you are married. If you are tired of me already, you needn't go telling people you only married me

because you were obliged. It's a great shame, that it is, and I won't put up with it. It's your place to love me, and no one else; and if you don't love me, I'll go back to my uncle, and never, never speak to you again!' and she burst into such a passion of sobs that Charlie was fairly frightened, and forgetting his rising anger, put his arms round her neck, and in his great clumsy way did all he could to put matters straight. But Laura was not to be comforted. The thought of Evy James taking her own peculiar place in Charlie's affections, let it be ever so small a corner, was a bitter pill to swallow easily; and so, although he succeeded in calming her sobs and reproaches, still it was but too plain that the words Laura had overheard had deeply wounded her, and that the truce now patched up between them would be of no very lasting character, on her side at least.

To say that Charlie was hurt at this outbreak would be but a mild way of expressing his feelings. Their engagement had been too short to give him an opportunity of judging what his future wife's temper or character was, and now that the truth had come upon him so unmistakably, and so early in his married life, it was doubly painful. That he had spoken the words which Laura had heard, was true enough; but that their sense had been very much misunderstood, was equally so.

Evylyn James was one of those pretty child-like girls who, from their very childishness, become the pets of society, and receive as such the attentions of every man of their acquaintance, without a thought entering the gentleman's head that the great fuzzy mass of curls brushing so daintily against his coat belongs to a young lady quite old enough, and more than willing, to receive his admiration most seriously. As to his words touching the obligation to be married, Laura had unfortunately heard too little; the remainder of the sentence, a tribute, laughingly expressed, to his love for her, and the obligation it placed him under to marry the one he loved best, having been lost in the excitement of the moment. And Laura was not a woman to listen to explanations: she had got it into her head that Charlie had only married her for her money; and with an obstinacy partly natural, and very much fostered by some half-dozen years of uncontrol, she intended to keep it there.

So Charlie found all his clumsy, good-natured schemes for reconciliation fall flat, or only meet with just sufficient response to prevent the breach opening afresh with renewed bitterness. All day long this state of things continued, till he was only too glad when Laura pleaded a headache, as an excuse for giving up her afternoon walk, and he was able to slip out and join his friends at the mess.

'Hallo, Griff!' shouted a chorus of voices as he opened the door, 'heard the news?'

'No. What news?'

'Why, two companies ordered to Ireland, and yours is one: I saw the letter in the orderly-room not ten minutes ago; you must have passed it on your way up.'

Charlie stuck both hands in his pockets and gave vent to his feelings in a long whistle; then he clapped on his hat again, and without noticing the enjoyment his discomfiture caused, strode across to the orderly-room. He found the adjutant, Jones of the large family, in the grimy little place,

surrounded by piles of blue big-margined documents, plentifully spattered with red tape, poring over the largest of them to the running accompaniment of the sergeant-major's mechanical voice, dictating the evening 'orders' in the adjoining room.

It was a dismal squeezed-up place, with cobwebs in the corners, and an exasperating clock ticking the regulation time over a chilly scrap of fire of regulation coal, in a regulation grate, presided over by a huge regulation poker of the most bloated proportions. There were ink-splashes on the floor, and ink-stains on the unwholesome coloured paper, and an inky look-out over chimney-tops from the cramped little window; and nests of pigeon-holes in battered iron-clamped cases, replete with more red splattered papers, a pile of regulation books on the top, their martial tint dim and dingy with thumb-marks and age; and there was an arm-chair for the colonel, and a barrack-chair for the adjutant, both ink-stained and shiny with use, a regulation deal-table, a cast-iron coal-box, and a rusty musket standing beside it. A meagre, chilly air pervaded the whole place, not much relieved by the great ornamental V.R.s that sprawled over everything.

Once, in the days of his poverty, Charlie had coveted the seat in that shiny chair, and had spent many bitter hours brooding over the accession of the chosen Jones to his scanty honours and emoluments; but all that was changed now; so he hurried past the uprising orderlies with a kindly nod, and startled poor peering Jones with the energy of his cheery voice as he put his question.

'Yes, your company and Williams's, F. and H. Of course it's a great bore for you: I told the colonel so; but it was your turn for detachment, and he would not hear a word of it. Have you seen the orderly? He's been gone some time.—I hope Mrs Griffiths is quite well?'

'It's a confounded nuisance just now, you see,' muttered Charlie, far too deep in his own thoughts to listen to Jones's civilities. 'If a fellow had only himself to think of, of course it would not matter. Would there be any chance, if I saw the colonel, d'you think?'

'The colonel has gone to town. But I'm sure it wouldn't be of any use: there's been a lot of grumbling lately about "duty" and "married men," and he is determined to stick to the "roster" in everything.'

'When do we start?' asked Charlie.

'To-morrow, by the four train: you'll catch the Cork boat at Portsmouth the same night. I've put it all in "orders," and the "papers" will be ready at ten to-morrow. The paymaster will settle with you to the end of the month. You'd better see him as soon as you can. And Williams, of course, as the senior, will look after the "warrants," so you won't have much bother.—I'm really sorry it should annoy you so, Griffiths,' added Jones, as Charlie turned sulkily to leave—'indeed I am. I said all I could to the colonel, but you know what he is when he takes a thing into his head.'

'Oh, all right, old fellow. It isn't that,' said Charlie: 'I don't mind it; only, just now, you see, it's so deuced awkward, that's all. Good-night. Thanks for speaking for me. I'll be here at ten to-morrow for the papers;' and he stumped heavily down-stairs, past the noisy guard-room and the stiff sentry, and so into the busy streets, home. Laura was working; on the table beside her lay the ominous 'official.'



'Here's a go, Laurel!' burst in Charlie, forgetting in his haste the morning's breeze. 'The company's off Fenian-hunting to Ireland to-morrow, and there's no getting out of it.'

'Oh!' said Laura very quietly, without looking up.

'We must pack up to-night; the train goes at four to-morrow. Thank goodness, it's only lodgings. Pay up the week, and we are free.'

'We must pack up?' said Laura in the same passive tone, with a marked accent on the pronoun. 'Surely you don't expect me to go to Ireland!'

'Not go, Laurel! Why, are not you my wife?'

'Yes, I am.'

'Come, Laurel,' pleaded Charlie, and plumped down beside her on the hearthrug; 'don't go keeping up this sort of thing. You know I'm as sorry as any fellow can be at being so stupid with Evy—Miss James. I don't care an atom for her, and I've told you so ever so many times. How could I, with a dear little wife of my own to love? Laurel, dear, don't turn away. I know I'm stupid, and clumsy, and not half what a married fellow should be; but I do love you all the same, hundreds of times more than any girl I ever saw, though I'm perhaps not a good hand at saying it; and I can't bear anything to come between us, even for a day.' And he tried to wind his arm round her waist, but the chair-back was in the way; so he took her hand in his, and looked up in her face with such a tender, loving gaze, that had she but seen it, her coldness must have melted for very pity. But she had turned away; the moment passed; and one less chance lay between her and the inevitable.

'I may follow you, by-and-by. Certainly I could not go at present: I wonder you can expect it.' Every word seemed calculated, and they fell like icedrops on her husband's heart.

'Laurel, dearest, don't speak so coldly. It hurts me; indeed, it does. I'm not so very bad. I'll do anything, promise anything; only don't treat me so. Speak a kind word—but one; they cost so little, and make me very happy.'

'Had not you better get up? The servant might come in.'

'And must I really go alone?'

'Yes; I've told you so already.'

He stumbled to his feet, and something very like an oath crunched through his teeth.

'Laura!' he said; and he towered above her, giant-like, in his great simplicity—'Laura! you've made a man's heart ache to-day as it never ached before. God send you other thoughts when we meet again. I've loved you as my life; learned each day to love you better; striven to be worthy of the love I coveted, and fondly thought was mine; and now it comes to this. Good-bye, Laura. Perhaps when I'm gone, you'll be easier on my faults, and forget them.' His voice shook ever so little as he turned to go. Laura heard it, and for the instant her cruel pride failed her, and she started eagerly towards him. But the die was cast; his hand was on the door, and he passed out without a look. A word, a syllable, and his simple, earnest love would have caught her to his heart; but the word came not—and he was gone!

'Clem,' said Griffiths some half-hour afterwards, 'ask me to dinner in your room to-night, old boy.

I want a chat with you before I go, and it will be quiet there.'

'Why, what's up, Griff?' laughed his friend. 'You're glum enough to give every ensign in the army the blue-devils.'

'Am I?' said Charlie, conjuring up a smile.

'Oh, never mind; I didn't know. Let's go up and order dinner;' and he put his arm through his fellow-captain's, and strolled up to the barracks.

The bright fire and natty mess dinner, with its accompanying champagne, made Charlie forget his troubles for the time, and he chatted on with all his wonted ease, as dish after dish was removed, raking up old regimental memories, and cracking well-worn mess jokes in endless series, but not one word of Laura or his married life.

But when the captain's servant made his final exit with the crockery, and stumped his creaking ammunition boots to the regions below, there to make merry with the fragments, Charlie's manner changed of a sudden.

'Clements,' he said, laying his hand on the other's arm, 'when I joined the regiment, they put me in your company, and I never moved till I got my own—you've been a friend to me all these years, and I've grown to like you better than any other man I know—is it not so?'

'That it is, Charlie,' cried Clements, with a huge puff of smoke.

'There's something up between Laura and myself, ever since that cursed Smithson's affair. God knows, I've done my best to get over it; but she's a proud girl, and don't like to give in—perhaps when I'm gone she'll think it over, and make it all square—anyway, she wants to stay here, so I go alone.'

Clements gave two or three long puffs, to indicate his surprise and disapprobation of this most unwisely conduct, but said nothing.

'Now, what I want you to do, old fellow, is just to look in sometimes to see if she wants anything, or if any of the beggars here are putting on her. I shouldn't like my wife to be done, you know—not that Laura is not a sensible little woman, and has got a good head on her shoulders; but then women are but women—she's young yet, Clem., and has not knocked about much, so you'll drop in now and then, won't you, old boy; and if she says anything about wanting to—to come over to Ireland, why, you'll just see to it like a good fellow, won't you, Clem., for my sake!'

'That I will,' said Clements heartily, 'with all my heart, and am only sorry the pleasure's likely to last so short a time. She'll be over with you in county Cork in a week, depend upon it, Charlie.'

'I only wish I could think so,' answered Charlie with a sigh; and then he relapsed into silence, gazing vacantly into the fire, till Clements brought out some cards, and sat him down to écarté.

'Perhaps she'll say something when I wish her good-bye,' thought Charlie next day, as he clanked along the street toward his house, some half-hour before the train was to start; and his broad face lit up with such a pleasant smile at the thought, that the people turned to look again at the handsome young soldier with the sunny face, till he left a very sunbeam of smiling faces behind him. Even Laura, at the prospect of her husband's departure, had relaxed so much of her iciness as to prepare and fold up a small bundle of very thin sandwiches

in a sheet of her gilt monogram paper, and was busily tying them up when his step crossed the hall.

She put the sandwiches hurriedly on the table, and strove hard against her fate; but the pride-demon crept on with irresistible force, and its clutch fell hard and cold on her heart, stifling the good that was there, and covering it all with its cruel shroud.

'Good-bye, Laura,' he cried, bursting all radiant into the room; 'don't bother about coming till you feel up to it; only, don't think I shan't miss you.' Then his eyes fell on the packet beside her. 'You dear, kind girl!' he exclaimed, and his broad arm was round her neck, and his tawny whiskers sweeping across her cheek. 'Bless her! how I do love my wife!'

Will she not tear that fiend from her longing breast, and burst the spell that parts her from her love?

'What! not a kiss before we part, Laurel?' he pleaded so tenderly, using his pet name for the last time. 'Only one to live on till next time.'

She held her cold cheek to him, and bore his last caress without a sign.

'Good-bye, Laura, good-bye!' he said, pressing her to his heart, 'good-bye!'

And so he went.

Well may she dash aside the curtains, and gaze blindly through the fast welling tears; well may she sink on the seat beside her, and cover her face with her fingers, in all the mute agony of her loneliness. Too late the tears, alone now with her pride—alone!

#### GRASS.

THOU emerald loveliness, that paintest the face  
Of the broad earth, as azure paints the sky,  
Thou printest with thy footsteps every place  
From the soft meadow to the mountain high;  
Not the drudged highway lacks thy tender grace,  
For there thou smilest, with a sun-lit eye,  
Round harebells tolling in the wind, and daisies  
Nestling like birds, and cotter's cow that grazes.

Thou hast a beautiful old Saxon name,  
Which melts in the mouth like honey from the comb,  
Which, like a star, sheds down a golden flame,  
That lights the mind with images of home:  
The sloping bank, the level green, the dame  
Bleaching her linen under the blue dome;  
The croft where geese and gander stately stroll,  
The paddock where the brown mare tends her foal.

Thou queen'st it in the meadow where the kine,  
Or feed from thy fresh basket dewed with morn,  
Or on thy velvet carpet calm recline,  
Shewing the massive front and curved horn,  
And patient eye, like crystal dark with wine;  
They chew the cud; or sturdily upborne  
Above the thirsty pail, they yield the stream,  
Which Midas-handed hours touch into golden cream.

Thou art a fairy round the greenwood tree,  
With moonlight shadows to thy bosom prest;  
While timid, soft-toned winds sing lullaby,  
Themselves sinking among the leaves to rest;

Around the fountain bubbling gleefully,  
As with an infant's instinct for the breast,  
Thou comest, girdling it with greenery,  
The richest emerald in the sylvan scenery.

How rich art thou in gold and silver wealth!  
Bright gems of beauty sparkle in thy crown,  
Green mosses run their hands with child-like stealth  
In thine, and hide behind thy matron gown;  
Thou bloom'st the faded cheek with rose-leaved health,  
Whene'er the sick face from the smoky town  
Beholds thy kingcups, and thy pea-green mosses,  
And daisies sunning forth their orange bosses.

The all-melodious lark, who pours the shower  
Of copious anthem from the sapphire cope,  
Sings downward to his love, in thy green bower  
Nursing the callow minstrels of their hope,  
Beneath the sheltering pennons of thy power,  
Upon the fallow-leas, or on the slope,  
Which, like a stung lip, bulges on the mead  
Where April lambs delight to frisk and feed.

How lovely on the mountains are thy feet,  
Climbing to reach the kisses of the skies,  
To drain the crystal cloudlet's chalice sweet,  
And sun thy brow in virgin morning's rise,  
When hill to hill rings with the woolly bleat,  
And the lone, plaided, staff-girt shepherd eyes  
His witless charge, and whistles from his heel,  
His dog to scare the wanderers from the commonweal!

How charming, when the morning round her girds  
Her fulgent robes, and the unnumbered dews  
Sparkle upon thy blades, like humming-birds,  
In dazzling lustre of prismatic hues!  
Enchanting sight! as if the molten sherds  
Of some great rainbow's yellows, pinks, and blues,  
Had kindled all the tops of thy green spires,  
With endless lamps of many-coloured fires.

Rise, from thy yellow tomb, green form of Spring;  
Arise, and paint the mountain and the vale;  
O haste! and in thy nursing bosom bring  
The silver daisy and the primrose pale.  
The blades *will* spring, the merry birds *will* sing;  
'Tis this that cheers us mid December's gale,  
While the lank woods and the all smileless earth  
Present no sign of leaf, or snowdrop's birth.

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